

M. A. H. 1798

SERMON

PREACHED AT THE

F U N E R A L

OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

JOHN EARL OF ROCHESTER,

WHO DIED AT WOODSTOCK-PARK, JULY 26,
1680, AND WAS BURIED AT SPIESBURY
IN OXFORDSHIRE, AUGUST 9.

BY ROBERT PARSONS, M.A.

CHAPLAIN TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE *K*ENE
COUNTESS DOWAGER OF ROCHESTER.

A NEW EDITION CORRECTED.

PROPER TO BE GIVEN AWAY AT FUNERALS.

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1798.

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MEMORIAL

OF THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

JOHN EARLE & MOUNTAIN

WHO DIED AT WOODBURY, CONNECTICUT, 1880

AND WAS BORN IN OXFORD, ENGLAND, 1802

BY ROBERT PARSONS, M.A.

CHURCHMAN TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE JOHN EARLE & MOUNTAIN

A NEW EDITION CORRECTED



PRINTED FOR E. AND C. RIVINGTON

1798

*M. A. J. To
Mr. Halbert*

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

ANNE, AND ELIZABETH,

DOWAGER COUNTESSSES OF

ROCHESTER.

RIGHT HONOURABLE,

YOUR Ladyships, or any else, cannot think meaner of this Performance than I myself do; for besides the great hurry and disorder that I was in upon the loss of such a Patron as my Lord, I am sufficiently conscious how unfit I am to appear in public, especially upon such a nice and great Subject. As His Lordship's particular Commands brought me to the Pulpit, so Your's only have brought me to the Press. And therefore I hope, whatever Usage the following Discourse may meet with abroad, I shall

DEDICATION.

always find a shelter in Your Ladyships Favours: and the rather, because You can, both of you, largely attest the Truth of most of the remarkable Occurrences that I have taken notice of during his Lordship's penitential Sickness. I shall add nothing more, but wish You may never forget the Goodness of Almighty God, who (through this whole melancholy Scene) has signalized his good Providence to You both: and that You may ever live under the special Protection thereof, is the constant Prayer of,

Your Honours most Faithful, and

Most Obedient Humble Servant,

ADDERBURY,
August 30, 1680.

ROBERT PARSONS.

ST. LUKE xv. 7.

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.

IF ever there were a Subject that might deserve and exhaust all the Treasures of religious Eloquence in the Description of so great a Man, and so great a Sinner as now lies before us; together with the Wonders of the Divine Goodness, in making him as great a Penitent; I think the present Occasion affords one as remarkable as any Place or Age can produce.

INDEED so great and full of Matter it is, that it is too big to come out of my Mouth, and perhaps not all of it fit or needful so to do. The greatness of his Parts are well enough known, and of his Sins too well, in the World; and neither my Capacity, nor Experience, nor my Profession, will allow me to be so proper a Judge, either of the

one or the other. Only as God has been pleased to make me a long while a sad Spectator, and a secret Mourner for his Sin; so has he at last graciously heard the Prayers of his nearest Relations, and true Friends, for his Conversion and Repentance: and it is the good Tidings of that especially, which God has done for his Soul, that I am now to *publish and tell abroad to the World*, not only by the Obligations of mine Office, in which I had the Honour to be a weak Minister to it, but by his own express and dying Commands.

Now although, to describe this worthily, would require a Wit equal to that with which he lived, and a Devotion too, equal to that with which he died, and to match either will be a very hard Task; yet besides that I am not sufficient for these Things, (for who is?) and that my Thoughts have been rather privately busied to secure a real Repentance to himself, whilst living, than to publish it abroad to others in an artificial Dress after he is dead; I say, besides all this, I think I shall have less need to call in the Aids of secular Eloquence. The proper Habit of Repentance is not fine Linnen, or any delicate Array, such as are used in the Court or Kings Houses, but Sackcloth and Ashes: And the Way which God Almighty takes to convey it, is *not by the Wards of Man's Wisdom*, but by the Plainness of his written Word, assisted by the inward Power and *Demonstration of the Spirit*: and the Ef-

fects it works, and by which it discovers itself, are not any raptures of Wit and Fancy, but the most humble Prostrations both of Soul and Spirit, and the captivating all human Imaginations to the Obedience of a despised Religion, and a crucified Saviour.

AND it is in this Array, I intend to bring out this Penitent to you; an Array which I am sure he more valued, and desired to appear in, both to God and the World, than in all the Triumphs of Wit and Gallantry: And therefore (waving all these Rhetorical Flourishes, as beneath the Solemnity of the Occasion, and the Majesty of that great and weighty Truth I am now to deliver) I shall content myself with the Office of a plain Historian, to relate faithfully and impartially what I saw and heard; especially during his Penitential Sorrows; which if all that hear me this Day had been Spectators of, there would then have been no need of a Sermon to convince Men, but every Man would have been as much a Preacher to himself of this Truth, as I am, except these Sorrows: And yet even these Sorrows should be turned into Joys too, if we would only do what we pray for, that *the Will of God may be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven*: for so our blessed Lord assures us; *I say unto you, that likewise ye shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, &c.* From which I shall consider,

First, THE Sinner particularly that is before us.

Secondly, THE Repentance of this Sinner, together with the Means, the Time, and all probable Sincerity of it.

Thirdly, THE Joy that is in Heaven, and should be on Earth, for the Repentance of this Sinner.

Fourthly, THE comparative greatness and pre-eminence of this Joy, on the Account of his Example, that is, and should be for the Repentance of this Sinner, more than for the constant and uniform virtuousness of any good Liver; which will naturally lead me to my

Fifth and last Particular, To a special Address or Application to all that hear me; that they would all join in this Joy, in Praise and Thanksgivings to God for the Conversion of this Sinner; and if there be any that have been like him in their Sins, that they would also speedily imitate him in their Repentance.

AND *First*, Let us consider the Person before us, as he was certainly a great Sinner. But because Man was upright before he was a Sinner, and to measure the Greatness of his Fall, it will be necessary to take a view of that Height from which he fell; give me leave to go back a little to look into the
Rock

Rock from which he was hewn, the Quality, Family, Education, and Personal Accomplishments of this great Man. In doing of which, I think no Man will charge me with any Design of customary Flattery or Formality; since I intend only thereby to shew the Greatness and Unhappiness of his Folly, in the perverting so many excellent Abilities and Advantages for Virtue and Piety into the Service of Sin, and so becoming a more universal, insinuating, and prevailing Example of it.

As for his Family, on both sides, from which he was descended, they were some of the most famous in their Generations. His Grandfather was that excellent and truly great Man, CHARLES Lord WILMOT, Viscount *Athlone* in *Ireland*. HENRY his Father, who inherited the same Title and Greatness, was by his late Majesty King CHARLES I. created Baron of *Adderbury* in *Oxfordshire*, and by his present Majesty, Earl of *Rocheſter*. He was a Man of signal Loyalty, and Integrity indeed; and of such Courage and Conduct in Military Affairs, as became a great General. But my Endeavours of this Kind are superseded, though I had Time, by my want of Abilities to declare it worthily, as well as by the notoriety of these Severals; and that Person must be very ignorant of the late Transactions in the three Kingdoms, and the Misfortunes of our present King, who understands not the Service and Value of that eminent Subject. His

Mother (of whom I might speak great and worthy Things, were it not that I avoid the Imputation of Flattery) was the Relict of Sir FRANCIS HENRY LEE, of *Ditchly* in the County of *Oxford*, Baronet, Grandmother to the present Right Honourable Earl of *Litchfield*, and the Daughter of that Generous and Honourable Gentleman Sir JOHN St. JOHN of *Lyddiard*, in the County of *Wilts*, Baronet, whose Family was so remarkable for Loyalty, that several of his Sons, willingly offered themselves in the Day of Battle, and died for it; and whilst the Memory of the *English* or *Irish* Rebellion lasts, that Family cannot want a due Veneration in the Minds of any Person, that loves either God or the King.

As for his Education, it was in *Wadham* College in *Oxford*, under the Care of, that wise and excellent Governor Dr. BLANDFORD, the late Right Reverend Bishop of *Worcester*; there it was that he laid a good Foundation of Learning and Study, though he afterwards built upon that Foundation Hay and Stubble. There he first sucked from the Breast of his Mother the University, those Perfections of Wit, and Eloquence, and Poetry, which afterwards, by his own corrupt Stomach, or some ill Juices, were turned into Poison to himself and others; which certainly can be no more a blemish to those illustrious Seminaries of Piety and good Learning, than a disobedient Child is to a wise and virtuous Father,

Eather, or the Fall of Man to the Excellency of Paradise.

HIS Quality I shall take no Notice of; there being so much of what was excellent and extraordinary in this great Person, that I have no Room for any Thing that is common to him with others.

HE had a Wit so rare and fruitful in its Invention, and withal so choice and delicate in its Judgment, that there is nothing wanting in his Compossures to give a full Answer to that Question, *What and where Wit is?* except the Purity and Choice of Subject. For had such excellent Seeds but fallen upon good Ground, and instead of pitching upon a Beast or a Lust, been raised up on high, to celebrate the Mysteries of the Divine Love, in Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs; I persuade myself, we might by this time have received from his Pen as excellent an Idea of Divine Poetry under the Gospel, useful to the teaching of Virtue, especially in this Generation, as his profane Verses have been to destroy it. And I am confident, had God spared him a longer Life, this would have been the whole Business of it, as I know it was the Vow and Purpose of his Sicknefs.

HIS natural Talent was excellent, but he had hugely improved it by Learning and Industry, being thoroughly acquainted with all the Classic Authors, both Greek and Latin; a thing very rare, if not peculiar to him, among those of his Quality; which yet he used

not as other Poets have done, to translate or steal from them, but rather to better and improve them by his own natural Fancy.

His other personal Accomplishments in all the Perfections of a Gentleman, for the Court or the Country, whereof he was known by all Men to be a very great Master, is no part of my Business to describe or understand: and whatever they were in themselves, I am sure they were but miserable Comforters to him, since they only ministered to his Sins, and made his Example the more fatal and dangerous; for so we may own (nay I am obliged by him not to hide, but to shew the Rocks, which others may avoid) that he was once one of the *greatest of Sinners*.

AND truly none but one so great in Parts could be so; as the chiefest of the Angels for Knowledge and Power became most dangerous. His Sins were like his Parts, (for from them corrupted they sprang) all of them high and extraordinary. He seemed to affect something singular and paradoxical in his Impieties, as well as in his Writings, above the Reach and Thought of other Men; taking as much Pains to draw others in, and to pervert the right Ways of Virtue, as the Apostles and Primitive Saints did, *to save their Souls, and them that heard them*. For this was the heightning and amazing Circumstance of his Sins, that he was so diligent and industrious to recommend and propagate them; not like those of old that *hated the Light*; but those the

the Prophet mentions, *Isa. iiii. 9. Who declare their Sin as Sodom and hide it not, that take it upon their Shoulders, and bind it to them as a Crown; framing Arguments for Sin, making Profelytes to it, and writing Panegyricks upon Vice; singing Praises to the great Enemy of God, and casting down Coronets and Crowns before his Throne.*

NAY so confirmed was he in Sin, that he lived, and oftentimes almost died, a Martyr for it. God was pleased sometimes to punish him with the Effects of his Folly, yet till now (he confessed) *they had no Power to melt him into true Repentance; or if at any time he had some lucid Intervals from his Folly and Madness, yet, alas! how short and transitory were they? All that Goodness was but as a Morning Cloud, and as the early Dew which vanishes away; he still returned to the same Excess of Riot, and that with so much the more Greediness, the longer he had fasted from it.*

AND yet even this desperate Sinner, that one would think had made a covenant with Death, and was at an agreement with Hell, and just upon the Brink of both; God, to magnify the Riches of Grace and Mercy, was pleased to snatch as a Brand out of the Fire. As St. PAUL, though before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, yet obtained mercy, that in him Christ Jesus might shew forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them that should hereafter believe on him to

everlasting life; 1 Tim. i. 13, 16. so God struck him to the Ground as it were by a Light from Heaven, and a Voice of Thunder round about Him. Insomuch that now the Scales fall from off his Eyes, as they did from St. PAUL's; his stony Heart was opened, and the Streams of Tears gushed out, the bitter but wholesome Tears of true Repentance.

AND that this may appear to be so, I think it necessary to account for these three Things;

I. For the Means of it; that it was not barely the Effect of Sicknes, or the Fear of Death; but the Hand of God also working in them, and by them, manifestly.

II. For the Time of it: that though it was a Death-bed Repentance, and therefore full of Danger, and the utmost Hazard; yet was it not impossible to be true, nor absolutely desperate.

III. For the Sincerity of it: that what was thus possible to be good and true, probably was so; which, though none but God that sees the Heart, can tell certainly, yet Man even also may and ought to believe it; not only in the Judgment of Charity, but of moral Justice, from all evident Signs of it, which were possible to be given by one in his Condition.

AND first for the Means or Method of it, That which prepared the Way for it was a sharp

Sharp and painful Sickness, with which God was pleased to visit him; the Way which the Almighty takes to reduce the wandering Sinner to the Knowledge of God, and of himself: *I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion unto the house of Judah; I, even I will tear and go away, and none shall relieve him. I will go, and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; and in their affliction they will seek me early,* Hof. v. 14, 15.

AND though, to forsake our Sins then, when we can no longer enjoy them, seems to be rather the Effect of Impotency and Necessity, than of Choice, and so, not so acceptable or praise-worthy; yet we find God Almighty often uses the one to bring about the other; and improves a forced abstinence from Sin, into a settled loathing, and a true detestation of it; of which I shall give two noted Instances. The first out of the Old Testament, in the famous Case of *Manasseh*, 2 Chron. xxxiii. (the nearest Parallel that I can find, both to the Sin and Repentance of the Person before us;) when he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all the kings of Judah before him, and had made Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and do worse than the Heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before them; yet we see God made use even of this Way to reduce him to true Repentance; for we read at the xith verse of this Chapter, *Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host*

host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon; and it follows in the next verse, *When he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him; and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem, and unto his kingdom: then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God, ver. 13.* And the Truth of his Repentance, though occasioned first by his Affliction, appeared afterwards by the following Reformation which he wrought; for he took away the strange Gods, ver. 15.

THE second Instance I shall give of a true, though forced Repentance, is in that well known Case of the Prodigal Son, which follows my Text in this Chapter: though he had wasted all his substance with riotous living, and was forced back to his Father's House only by extreme Hunger and Necessity, yet he was joyfully received by Him, for his father ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him, ver. 20. and the fatted calf was killed for him; and when his elder Brother was angry at it, the good Father justifies his Procedure in ver. 30. *It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found.*

AND truly it is one good Sign, that God is now taking Men into the number of his Children, when he is fixing upon them one of the greatest Badges and Characters of them; for therefore saith the Apostle, *we are chastened*

of the Lord, that we should not be condemned
 with the world; whilst those who are reserved
 for Destruction hereafter, do usually in his
 life come into no misfortune, nor are plagued like
 other men. For God does not afflict any wil-
 lingly, nor grieve the children of men: but as
 he is grieved himself for the suffering of his
 Children, (for in all their affliction, saith the
 Prophet, *he was afflicted*) so he doth not usu-
 ally punish wicked Men both here and here-
 after; and therefore they who are to be pu-
 nished with everlasting Destruction, God
 suffers to enjoy their portion in this life with-
 out any Disturbance. And because the Days
 of *Darkness* must be many, therefore does he
 suffer the Sinner many times, to *die an hun-*
dred years old, that he may take his full swing
 of what he hath set his Affections upon; and
 after a long and prosperous Life here, with-
 out any check in his career of Wickedness,
 he lets him drop down into Hell, without the
 least apprehension of Danger. So that in
 that Sense it is true which the Poets say, when
 they tell us, that the Descent into Hell is easy
 and pleasant.

AND therefore, on the contrary, we may
 reasonably presume, that Tribulation and An-
 guish, when it is borne with Patience and
 Resignation to God, and when it works a
 serious Reformation, will certainly minister
 to us an Entrance into everlasting Rest; and
 that the greater our Sufferings have been, the
 more abundant and much more grateful shall
 our Rest be.

Affliction,

affliction, as it rises not out of the Dust, but descends from that God, at whose hands we receive evil as well as good; so neither is it designed to deject us thither, but to raise us up to God from whence itself comes. The Pains of the Cross, as well that Cross which we must bear ourselves, as that which our Saviour bore, do in some Sense open the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers; and to some, as the Penitent Thief, the hope of Paradise is not given till their last Hour; and those who come in then, God is often pleased to make equal to them who have borne the burden and heat of the day; nay oftentimes to give them more, for he will love much, to whom much is forgiven.

It is true, there are such stubborn Natures, that, like Clay, are rather hardened by the Fire of Afflictions: ungracious Children, that fly in the Face of their heavenly Father in the very Instant when he is correcting them; or, it may be, like those Children under the Rod, who promise Wonders then, and presently after forget all. Such as these we have described, Psal. lxxviii. 34.—37. When he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned and inquired early after God; then they remembered that God was their Rock, and that the high God was their Redeemer: nevertheless, they did but flatter him with their mouths, and lied unto him with their tongues, for their heart was not right with him, neither continued they steadfast in his covenant. And it is probable this had been the Case formerly of this Person. But there was an evident difference betwixt the

the Effects of this Sickness upon him, and many others before: "He had other Sentiments of Things now, he told me, and acted upon quite different Principles;" he was not vexed with it, as it was painful or hindered him from his Sins, which he would have rolled under his Tongue all the while, and longed again to be at; but he submitted patiently to it, accepted it at the hand of God, and was thankful, blessing and praising God not only in, but for his Extremities. There was now no *Cursings*, no *Railings*, or *Reproaches* to his Servants, nor those about him, which in other Sicknesses were their usual Entertainment; but he treated them with all the Meekness and Patience in the World; begging Pardon frequently of the meanest of them but for a hasty Word, which the extremity of his Sickness, and sharpness of his Pain might easily force from him. His Prayers were not so much for Ease or Health, or a continuance in Life; as for Grace, and Faith, and perfect Resignation to the Will of God. So that, I think, we may not only charitably but justly conclude, that his Sickness was not the chief Ingredient, but, through the Grace of God, an effectual Means of a true, though late Repentance.

Secondly, AND for that I am to account in the next place, I mean the Time of it; and to make it out to you, that though it was a Death-bed Repentance, and therefore full of Danger, and the utmost Hazard, yet it was

not wholly impossible to be true, nor absolutely desperate.

THAT it was hugely dangerous, and of the utmost hazard to defer it so long, must needs be granted by all wise and considerate Men: I wish all Men were so wise as seriously to consider it, and provide for it.

For should God have snatched him away in the very Act of Sin, and that, like ZIMRI and COSBI, DATHAN and ABIRAM, ANANIAS and SAPPHIRA, he had gone down quick into Hell; yet we must have acknowledged, that *righteous art thou, O Lord, and clear when thou art judged.* If God had taken him from the Land of the Living, either by some sudden Accident, by a raging Fever, or by some stupid Lethargy or Apoplexy, when he had had no time for Reflection or Repentance; in what a dreadful Condition had his Soul been for ever? Or if God had vouchsafed him (as he did) some sharp lingering Sickness, when he might have had leisure to repent; yet what Assurance was there that such a Repentance would have followed; Or if it had, that it would have been accepted? Was it not more likely that he would still have cried, with the wise Man's Staggard, *Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, till poverty, a dismal Poverty, came upon him?*

BUT if he had resolved at that time to break off his Sins by Repentance, yet, alas! how improper a time was that for it? It is not easy to be present and consistent to ourselves, when we are surrounded with disquieting

ing if not stupifying Pains, when there is a necessary decay and dulness of Spirits, a short Memory, flat and low Affections; and at the same time, a more than ordinary hurry and surcharge of worldly Business; a House to be set in Order; Children to be provided for in their Fortunes and Education; Creditors to be satisfied; and all this amidst the Cries and Mournings of our nearest Relations and Friends about us. And certainly we must think Repentance a very easy Task, if we reckon ordinarily, that he that is disabled from all other Things else, shall yet be fit to perfect and complete it.

BUT allowing our Thoughts to be as clear or clearer in our Sickness, than in our calmest and strongest Seasons, (which yet I think no Man in his Wits will believe) yet after all, what Security have we that we shall be able to improve or employ it to a true Repentance? It may be, before we come to that, the measure of our Iniquities is filled up already, and the irreversible Sentence is gone out, though not executed against us: My Patience *shall not always strive* (is *in calamitatem*, as the LXX) *with men.* Cut it down, *why cambereth it the ground?* It may be cursed and devoted, though we do not see it actually withered and destroyed.

BUT supposing this also, that we are allowed a farther time and means for Repentance; yet, alas! no ordinary Means will serve us, when we have been thus hardened by customary Sinning: and I am sure, should God proceed with us by the measure of strict Justice, he
might

might rather take from us even that which we have, than give us any extraordinary Assistances which we have so abused.

AND after all this, if God shall give us such extraordinary Assistances, whatever Allowances God may make, yet there is still no certain Security or Comfort to any dying Death-bed Penitent; *Charity hopeth all things, and believeth all things*; and the Relaxations of the Censures of the Church in Absolution on probable Signs of Repentance, must follow the Judgment of Charity; yet the Certainty of the Sinner's Absolution with God in Heaven, depends only upon the inward real sincerity of his Repentance, and consequently upon the approving of it by his future Conversation; and therefore God Almighty only, who knows what the one is at present, and what the other will be, can be a competent Judge of it. And certainly, it is enough for such a Penitent, if he be secured at last of entering into the Kingdom of Heaven though he has very rarely, if at all, the present comfortable Experience and Assurance of it on a Death-bed Repentance, which indeed is reserved as the Reward of a constant virtuous and holy Life.

BUT though what I have said be enough to conclude a Death-bed Repentance infinitely hazardous, and therefore hugely unfit for any wise Man to depend upon; yet will it not be sufficient to prove it absolutely impossible. No sober Man certainly would hazard his Life upon the chance of a Die, when it is a thou-

and

stand to one but he miscarries; or venture into a crazy Cook-boat out of a sound Ship, when it is but barely possible he may be saved; and yet no wise Man neither but will allow a Possibility of being saved both by the one and the other: and it is only the bare Possibility of a Death-bed Repentance, that I am now pleading for.

AND that this Possibility was produced into act, and so rendered very probable, also, in the Case of this Person here before us, will best be judged by the Marks I am now to give you of the Sincerity of his Repentance; for which I am in the next place to account.

Thirdly, AND it was the Power of the Divine Grace, and of that only, that brake through all these Obstacles that I have now mentioned; that God (who is a God of infinite Compassion and Forbearance) allowed him leisure and opportunity for Repentance; that he awakened him from his spiritual Slumber by a pungent Sickness; that he gave him such a Presence of Mind, as both to provide prudently for his worldly Affairs, and yet not be distracted or diverted by them from the Thoughts of a better World; that he lengthened out his day of Grace, and accompanied the ordinary means of Salvation, and the weak Ministry of his Word, with the convincing and overruling Power of his Spirit to his Conscience; which Word of God became to him *quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of his soul and spirit*; and at last the Spirit of God
wit-

witnessth to his spirit, that now he was become one of the children of God.

Now if the Thief upon the Cross (an Instance too much abused) was therefore accepted, because accompanied with all the Effects of a sincere Convert, which his Condition was capable of; as Confession of Christ in the midst of the Blasphemies of the Pharisees, and his own lewd Companions, and desertion even of Christ's Disciples; if his Repentance be therefore judged real, because he seems to be more concerned in the Remembrance of Christ's future Kingdom than his own Death; if St. PAUL was approved by the same more abundant Labours which he commended in the *Corinthians*, *yea, what zeal? what fear? what vehement desire?* 2 Cor. vii. 11. I think I shall make it appear that the Repentance of this Person was accompanied with the like hopeful Symptoms: and I am so sensible of that awful Presence, both of God and Man, before whom I speak, who are easily able to discover my Failings, that I shall not deliver any thing, but what I know to be a strict and religious Truth.

Upon my first Visit to him, (May 26.) just at his return from his Journey out of the West, he most gladly received me, shewed me extraordinary Respect upon the score of mine Office, "thanked God, who had in Mercy
"and good Providence sent me to him,
"who so much needed my Prayers and Counsels; and acknowledging how unworthily heretofore he had treated that Order
"of

“ of Men, reproaching them that they were
 “ Proud, and prophesied only for Rewards;
 “ but now he had learnt how to value them;
 “ that he esteemed them the Servants of the
 “ most High God, who were to shew to him
 “ the Way to everlasting Life.”

At the same time, I found him labouring
 under strange Trouble and Conflicts of Mind,
 his Spirit wounded, and his Conscience full of
 Terrors. Upon his Journey, he told me,
 “ he had been arguing with greater vigour
 “ against God and Religion, than ever he
 “ had done in his life-time before, and that
 “ he was resolved to run them down with
 “ all the Argument and Spite in the World!”
but, like the great Convert St. PAUL, he
found it hard to kick against the pricks. For
 God at that time had, so struck his Heart by
 his immediate Hand, that presently he argued
 as strongly for God and Virtue, as before he
 had done against it. That God strangely
 opened his Heart, creating in his Mind most
 awful and tremendous Thoughts and Ideas of
 the Divine Majesty, with a delightful Con-
 templation of the Divine Nature and Attri-
 butes, and of the Loveliness of Religion and
 Virtue. “ I never, said he, was advanced
 “ thus far towards Happiness in my Life be-
 “ fore, though upon the Commission of some
 “ Sins extraordinary, I have had some checks
 “ and warnings considerable from within;
 “ but still struggled with them, and so wove
 “ them off again. The most observable that I
 “ remember was this: One day an Atheist-”

"cal Meeting, at a Person of Quality's, I
 "undertook to manage the Cause, and was
 "the principal Disputant against God and
 "Piety, and for my Performances received
 "the Applause of the whole Company: upon
 "which my Mind was terribly struck, and I
 "immediately applied thus to myself. Good
 "God! that a Man that walks upright, that
 "sees the wonderful Works of God, and has
 "the use of his Senses and Reason, should use
 "them to the defying of his Creator! But tho'
 "this was a good Beginning towards my Con-
 "version, to find my Conscience touched for
 "my Sins, yet it went off again; nay, all my
 "Life long, I had a secret value and reve-
 "rence for an honest Man, and loved Mo-
 "rality in others. But I had formed an odd
 "Scheme of Religion to myself, which would
 "solve all that God and Conscience might
 "force upon me; yet I was not ever well re-
 "conciled to the Business of Christianity, nor
 "had that Reverence for the Gospel of Christ
 "as I ought to have." Which estate of
 Mind continued till the third Chapter of
 Isaiah was read to him, (wherein there is a
 lively description of the Sufferings of our
 Saviour, and the Benefits thereof) and some
 other Portions of Scripture; by the power
 and efficacy of which Word, assisted by his
 Holy Spirit, God so wrought upon his Heart,
 that he declared that "the Mysteries of the
 "Passion appeared as clear and plain to him,
 "as ever any thing did that was represented in
 "a Glass." So that the Joy and Admiration,
 which

which possessed his Soul upon reading God's Word to him, was remarkable to all about him; and he had so much delight in his Testimonies, that in my Absence, he begged his Mother and Lady to read the same to him frequently, and was unsatisfied (notwithstanding his great Pains and Weakness) till he had learned the liid. of ISAIAH without Book.

At the same time, discoursing of his manner of Life from his Youth up, and which all Men knew was too much devoted to the *service of sin*, and that the *lusts of the flesh, of the eye, and the pride of life*, had captivated him; He was very large and particular in his Acknowledgments about it, more ready to accuse himself than I or any one else can be: publicly crying out, "O blessed God, can such a horrid Creature as I am be accepted by thee, who has denied thy Being, and condemned thy Power?" Asking often, "Can there be Mercy and Pardon for me? Will God own such a Wretch as I?" And in the middle of his Sickness said, "Shall the unspeakable Joys of Heaven be conferred on me? O mighty Saviour! never, but through thine infinite Love and Satisfaction! O never, but by the Purchase of thy Blood!" adding, "that with all abhorrency he did reflect upon his former Life; that sincerely, and from his Heart, he did repent of all that Folly and Madness which he had committed."

INDEED he had a true and lively Sense of God's great Mercy to him in striking his hard Heart, and laying his Conscience open, which hitherto was deaf to all God's Calls and Methods; saying, "If that God that died for great as well as lesser Sinners, did not speedily apply his infinite Merits to his poor Soul, his wound was such as no man could conceive or bear." Crying out, "that he was the vilest Wretch and Dog that the Sun shined upon, or the Earth bore; that now he saw his Error in not living up to that Reason which God endued him with, and which he unworthily vilified and condemned;" wished he "had been a starving Leper crawling in a Ditch;" that he "had been a Link-boy or a Beggar, or for his whole life-time confined to a Dungeon, rather than thus to have sinned against his God!"

How remarkable was his Faith, in a hearty embracing and devout Confession of all the Articles of our Christian Religion, and all the divine Mysteries of the Gospel? saying, that "that absurd and foolish Philosophy, which the World so much admired, propagated by the late Mr. HOBBS, and others, had undone him, and many more of the best Parts in the Nation;" who, without God's great Mercy to them, may never, I believe, attain such a Repentance.

I must not omit to mention his faithful adherence to, and casting himself entirely upon, the Mercies of Jesus Christ, and the free
Grace

Grace of God, declared to repenting Sinners through him; with a thankful Remembrance of his Life, Death, and Resurrection; begging *God to strengthen his faith*, and often crying out, *Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.*

HIS mighty love and esteem of the Holy Scriptures, his resolution to read them frequently, and meditate upon them, if God should spare him, having already tasted the good Word; for having spoken to his Heart, he acknowledged, "all the seeming absurdities and contradictions thereof, fancied by Men of corrupt and reprobate Judgments, were vanished, and the excellency and beauty appeared, being come to receive the Truth in the love of it."

HIS extraordinary fervent Devotions, and his own frequent Prayers, were most excellent and correct; amongst the rest, for the King, in such a manner as became a dutiful Subject, and a truly grateful Servant; for the Church and Nation, for some particular Relations, and then for all Men; his calling frequently upon me at all Hours to pray with him, or read the Scriptures to him; and towards the End of his Sick, would heartily desire "God to pardon his Infirmities, if he should not be so wakeful and intent through the whole Duty as he wished to be;" and that "though the Flesh was weak, yet the Spirit was willing; and hoped God would accept that."

His continual invocation of God's Grace and holy Spirit to sustain him, to keep him from all evil Thoughts, from all Temptations and diabolical Suggestions, and every thing which might be prejudicial to that religious Temper of Mind, which God had now so happily endued him withal: crying out, one night especially, "how terribly the
 " Tempter did assault him, by casting upon
 " him lewd and wicked Imaginations: but I
 " thank God, said he, I abhor them all;
 " by the Power of his Grace, which I am
 " sure is sufficient for me, I have overcome
 " them; it is the Malice of the Devil, because I am rescued from him; and the
 " Goodness of God, that frees me from all
 " my spiritual Enemies."

His great Joy at his Lady's conversion from Popery to the Church of *England* (being, as he termed it, *A Faction supported only by Fraud and Cruelty*) which was by her done with Deliberation and mature Judgment; the dark Mists of which having been for some Months before breaking away, were now cleared, by her receiving the blessed Sacrament with her dying Husband, at the receiving of which no Man could express more Joy and Devotion than he did; and having experienced the Word of Life, and seen the Salvation of God, in the Preparation of his Mind, he was now ready to depart in Peace.

His hearty Concern for the pious Education of his Children, wishing that his "*Son might never be a Wit,*" that is, (as he himself explained

plained it) "one of those wretched Creatures, who pride themselves in abusing God and Religion, denying his Being, or his Providence; but that he might become an honest and religious Man, which could only be the Support and Blessing of his Family;" complaining, "what a vicious and naughty World they were brought into;" and that "no Fortunes or Honours were comparable to the Love and Favour of God to them:" in whose Name he blessed them, prayed for them, and committed them to his Protection.

His strict charge to those Persons, in whose custody his Papers were, "to burn all his profane and lewd Writings, as being only fit to promote Vice and Immorality, by which he had so highly offended God, and shamed and blasphemed that holy Religion into which he had been Baptized; and all his obscene and filthy Pictures, which were so notoriously scandalous."

His readiness to make Restitution to the utmost of his Power to all Persons whom he had injured; and for those whom he could not make a Compensation to, he prayed for God's and their Pardon. His remarkable justice in taking all possible care for the Payment of his Debts, which, before, he confessed he had not so fairly and effectually done.

His readiness to forgive all Injuries done against him, some more particularly mentioned, which were great and provoking; nay, annexing thereto all the Assurance of a future

Friendship, and hoping he should be as freely forgiven at the Hand of God.

How tender and concerned was he for his Servants about him in his Extremities, (manifested by the Beneficence of his Will to them) pitying their Troubles in watching with him, and attending him, treating them with Candour and Kindness, as if they had been his Intimates!

How hearty were his Endeavours to be serviceable to those about him, exhorting them to *the fear and love of God, and to make a good use of his Forbearance and Long-suffering to Sinners, which should lead them to Repentance.* And here I must not pass by his pious and most passionate Exclamation to a Gentleman of some Character, who came to visit him upon his Death-bed: "O remember that you condemn God no more, he is
" an avenging God, and will visit you for
" your Sins; he will in Mercy, I hope, touch
" your Conscience sooner or later, as he has
" done mine: You and I have been Friends
" and Sinners together a great while, therefore I am the more free with you: We
" have been all mistaken in our Conceits and
" Opinions, our Persuasions have been false
" and groundless, therefore God grant you
" Repentance." And seeing him the next Day again, he said to him, "Perhaps you
" were disobliged by my plainness to you
" Yesterday; I spake the Words of Truth
" and Soberness to you," and (striking his
" Hand

Hand upon his Breast) said, "I hope God
" will touch your Heart."

LIKEWISE his commands to me, "to
" preach abroad and to let all Men know (if
" they knew it not already) how severely God
" had disciplined him for his Sins by his afflict-
" ing Hand; that his Sufferings were most just,
" though he had laid ten thousand times more
" upon him; how he had laid one stripe upon
" another because of his grievous Provoca-
" tions, till he had brought him home to him-
" self; that in his former Visitations, they
" had not that blessed effect he was now sen-
" sible of. He had formerly some loose
" Thoughts and slight Resolutions of reform-
" ing, and designed to be better, because
" even the present Consequences of Sin were
" still pestering him, and were so trouble-
" some and inconvenient to him; but that
" now he had other sentiments of Things,
" and acted upon other Principles."

HIS willingness to die if it pleased God,
" resigning himself always to the divine Dis-
" posal; but if God should spare him yet a
" longer time here, he hoped to bring Glory
" to the Name of God, in the whole course
" of his Life, and particularly by his Endea-
" vours to convince others, and to assure
" them of the Danger of their Condition, if
" they continued impenitent; and how gra-
" ciously God had dealt with him."

HIS great Sense of his Obligations to those
excellent Men, the Right Reverend my Lord
Bishop of OXFORD, and Dr. MARSHALL, for
their charitable and frequent Visits to him, and
Prayers with him; and Dr. BURNET, who

came on purpose from *London* to see him, who were all very serviceable to his Repentance.

His extraordinary Duty and Reverence to his Mother, with all the grateful Respects to her imaginable, and Kindness to his good Lady, beyond expression, (which may well enhance such a Loss to them) and to his Children, obliging them with all the endearments that a good Husband or tender Father could bestow.

To conclude these Remarks, I shall only read to you his dying Remonstrance, sufficiently attested, and signed by his own Hand, as his truest Sense, (which I hope may be useful for that good End he designed it) in Manner and Form following.

“ **F**OR the Benefit of all those whom I
 “ may have drawn into Sin by my Ex-
 “ ample and Encouragement, I leave to the
 “ World this my last Declaration, which I
 “ deliver in the Presence of the great God, who
 “ knows the Secrets of all Hearts, and before
 “ whom I am now appearing to be judged.
 “ **T**HAT from the bottom of my Soul I detest,
 “ and abhor the whole Course of my former,
 “ wicked Life: that I think I can never suffici-
 “ ently admire the Goodness of God, who has
 “ given me a true Sense of my pernicious O-
 “ pinions and vile Practices, by which I have
 “ hitherto lived without Hope, and without
 “ God in the World; have been an open
 “ Enemy to Jesus Christ, doing the utmost
 “ despite to the Holy Spirit of Grace. And
 “ that the greatest Testimony of my Charity

to

" to such is, to warn them in the Name of
 " God, and as they regard the Welfare of
 " their immortal Souls, no more to deny his
 " Being, or his Providence, or despise his
 " Goodness; no more to make a Mock at
 " Sin, or contempt the pure and excellent Re-
 " ligion of my ever blessed Redeemer, through
 " whose Merits alone, I, one of the greatest
 " of Sinners, do yet hope for Mercy and
 " Forgiveness. *Amen.*"

[Declared and Signed in the Presence of]

Anne Rochester.

Robert Parsons.

JUNE 19, 1680.

J. ROCHESTER.

AND now I cannot but mention with Joy
 and Admiration that steady Temper of Mind,
 which he enjoyed through the whole course
 of his Sickness and Repentance; which must
 proceed, not from a hurry and perturbation
 of Mind or Body, arising from the fear of
 Death, or dread of Hell only, but from an
 ingenuous love to God, and an uniform re-
 gard to Virtue, (suitable to that solemn De-
 claration of his, *I would not commit the least
 Sin to gain a Kingdom;*) with all possible Sym-
 ptoms of a lasting Perseverance in it, if God
 should have restored him. To which may be
 added, his comfortable Persuasions of God's
 accepting him to his Mercy, saying three or
 four Days before his Death, " I shall die,
 " but O, what unspeakable Glories do I see!
 " what Joys, beyond Thought or Expres-
 " sion, am I sensible of! I am assured of
 " God's Mercy to me thro' Jesus Christ.

" O how do I long to die ; and to be with
 " my Saviour ! "

THE time of his Sicknefs and Repentance was
 juſt nine Weeks ; in all which time he was ſo
 much maſter of his Reaſon, and had ſo clear an
 Underſtanding, (ſaving 30 Hours, about the
 middle of it, in which he was delirious) that he
 never dictated or ſpoke more compoſed in his
 Life : and therefore if any ſhall continue to ſay
 his Piety was the Effect of Madneſs or Vapours ;
 let me tell them it is highly diſingenuous, and
 that the Aſſertion is as ſilly as it is wicked. And
 moreover that the force of what I have delivered
 may not be evaded by wicked Men, who are
 reſolved to harden their Hearts, maugre all Con-
 victionſ, by ſaying, *This Thing was done in a
 Corner* ; I appeal, for the Truth thereof, to all
 ſorts of Perſons, who in conſiderable Numbers
 viſited and attended him, and more particularly
 to thoſe eminent Phyſicians who were near him,
 and converſant with him in the whole courſe of
 his tedious Sickneſs ; and who, if any, are
 competent judges of a Phrenſy or Delirium.

THERE are many more excellent Things in
 my Abſence, which have occaſionally dropt
 from his Mouth, that will not come within the
 narrow compaſs of a Sermon ; but theſe, I hope,
 will ſufficiently prove what I produce them for.
 And if any ſhall be ſtill unſatisfied herein in this
 hard-hearted Generation, it matters not, let
 them at their coſt be Unbelievers ſtill, ſo long
 as this excellent Penitent enjoys the comfort
 of his Repentance. And now from all theſe ad-
 mirable Signs we have great Reaſon to believe
 comfortably, that his Repentance was real, and,

his End, happy; and accordingly imitate the Neighbours and Cousins of ELIZABETH, who, when they heard how the Lord had shown great Mercy upon her, came and rejoiced with her, Luke i. 58.

FOR so we must learn, like the Ambassadors to some new Prince, to turn our Condolences into Congratulations, in conformity to an heavenly Example; For there is joy in heaven over one Sinner that repents.

I. A joy to God the Father, who has solemnly sworn, that he delights not in the Death of a Sinner, but rather that he should repent and live; who would have all men be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.

II. A joy to God the Son, that good Shepherd, mentioned in the Verse before my Text, who left the ninety and nine just Persons in the wilderness, and went after that which was lost, till he had found it; and when he had found it, he laid it on his shoulders rejoicing; and when he cometh home he calls together his friends and his neighbours (on Heaven and Earth) saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.

III. A joy to God the Holy Ghost, after he had been so often grieved, so despitefully treated, and so long resisted.

AND, IV. A joy to the whole Court in Heaven, in the presence of the Holy Angels, ver. 10. those ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation; to see that now at last, their labour is not in vain in the Lord, but that there is one more Subject gained to the obedience of their and our com-

mon:

mon

mon Lord; delivered from the Slavery, and admitted to fill up the Vacancy of Apostate Spirits.

AND as our *πολιτευμα*, our proper and natural Citizenship, or *Conversatio*, is in Heaven; so should our joys too be conformable to those of our Fellow-citizens. And therefore, after the Relations and Friends of this great Person have paid their natural tribute of Tears to so near a Relation, they should then turn their Sorrows into Joy, by the comfortable Consideration of his being a Penitent, upon Earth, and a Saint in Heaven.

I. THUS his dear Mother should rejoice, that the Son of her love and of her fears, as well as of her bowels, is now born again into a better World; adopted by his heavenly Father, and gone before her to take Possession of an eternal Inheritance.

II. His truly loving Consort should rejoice, that God has been so gracious to them both, as at the same time to give him a sight of his Errors in Point of Practice, and herself (not altogether without his means and endeavours) a sight of hers in point of Faith. And truly, considering the great Prejudices and Dangers of the *Roman* Religion, I think I may aver, that there is Joy in Heaven, and should be on Earth, for Her Conversion as well as His.

III. His noble and most hopeful Issue should rejoice, as their Years are capable; not that a dear and loving Father has left them, but that since he must leave them, he has left them the Example of a Penitent, and not of a Sinner; the Blessing of a Saint, in recommending them

them to an All-sufficient Father, and not entailing on them the fatal Curse that attends the Posterity of the Wicked and Impenitent.

IV. ALL good Men should rejoice, to see the triumphs of the Cross in these latter Days, and the Works of Divine Wisdom and Power. And bad Men certainly, whenever they consider it, are most of all concerned to joy and rejoice in it, as a condemned Malefactor is, to hear that a Fellow-criminal has got his Pardon, and that he may do so too, if he speedily sue for it.

AND this Joy of all will still be the greater, if we compare it with the Joy there is in the Case of just Persons, that need no Repentance, viz. that need not such a solemn extraordinary Repentance, or the whole change of Heart and Mind, as great Sinners do: and of this my Text pronounces, that there is greater joy in heaven, over one such Sinner that truly repenteth, than there is over ninety and nine just persons that need not such a repentance. And the reason we may conceive to be this; that since all Joy arises from Admiration and Surprise, as from something that is new and unexpected; accordingly, the Joy that proceeds from the Repentance and new Life of a notorious Sinner, must needs be greater than that which arises from the constant Piety of a good Man, which we have seen every Day; as a Resurrection from the Dead is more remarkable than our first Life. Besides that, such a Penitent's former Failings, are ordinarily the occasion of a greater and more active Piety afterwards; as our Convert earnestly

nestly wished, "That God would be pleased
 "to spare him but one year more, that in
 "that he might honour his Name propor-
 "tionably to the dishonour done to God in
 "his whole Life past." And we see St. PAUL
laboured more abundantly than all the Apostles
 in the Planting of the Church, because he
 had raged most furiously before in the Destruction
 of it; and our Saviour himself tells us,
that to whom much is forgiven, they will love
much, but to whom little is forgiven, they will
love little; and we know a Commander will
 love a Soldier more that redeems his former
 cowardice, by doing some brave and daring
 Action, than him, who never had that taint
 upon him, but yet never atchieved any thing
 remarkable. A Husbandman more rejoices
 at the Improvement of Briars and Thorns
 into an excellent Crop, from which once he
 had but little expectation, than for such a Soil
 as was remarkable neither for the one or the
 other.

It is certainly the most safe, indeed the
 only safe way, to be constantly virtuous; and
 he that is wise indeed, that is, *wise unto sal-*
vation, will endeavour to be one of those that
need no repentance; I mean that entire and
 whole Work of beginning anew, but will
 draw out the same Thread through his whole
 Life, and not let the Sun go down upon any
 of his Sins: but then the other Repentance
 is more remarkable, and, where it is real,
 the more effectual, to produce a fervent and
 a fruitful Piety; besides, the greater Glory
 to God in the Influence of the Example.

Which

Which may probably be a farther Reason of the excessive joy of Angels at the Conversion of such a Sinner; because they, who are better acquainted with Human Nature than we; and knowing it apt, like the Pharisees, to demand a Sign from Heaven, for the Reformation of corrupted Customs; they discern too, that such desperate spiritual Recoveries, will seem so many Openings of the Heavens in the Descent of the holy Dove, visibly to the Standers-by; and accordingly will have the greater influence upon them. And it is this, in the last Place, that I am to recommend to all that hear me this Day.

And having thus discharged the Office of an Historian, in a faithful Representation of the Repentance and Conversion of this great Sinner; give me leave now to bespeak you as an Ambassador of Christ, and in his Name earnestly *persuade you to be reconciled to Him*, and to follow this illustrious Person, not in his Sins any more, but in his Sorrows for them, and his forsaking them. I hope better things of you, my Brethren, than to think that all that now hear me, have need of such a Repentance, though all have need of some, and the best are most sensible of it. But if there be any in this place, or elsewhere, who have been drawn into a complacency or practice of any kind of Sin from his Example, let those especially be *persuaded to break off their Sins by Repentance*, by the same Example; that as he has been *for the fall*, so he may be now *for the rising again of many in Israel*. God knows, there are too many that are wise enough

enough to discern and follow the Examples
 of Evil, but to do Good from good Examples
 they have no Power: Such as these I would
 beseech, in their cooler Seasons, to ask them-
 selves that Question, *What Fruit had ye in those*
things whereof ye are now asbamed, for the End
of those things is Death? And if any encourage
 themselves in their Wickedness from this Ex-
 ample, resolving however to enjoy the good
 Things that are present; *to fill themselves with*
costly Wine, and to let no part of Pleasure pass
by them untasted; supposing, with the Gospel
 rich Man, that when one comes to them from the
 Dead, when Sicknes or old Age approaches,
 that then *they will repent;* let such as these
 consider the dreadful hazard they run by such
 pernicious Counsels. It may be (and it is
 but just with God it should be) that whilst
 they are making provision for the flesh to fulfil
 the lusts thereof, and are saying to their Souls,
Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many
years; therefore, take thine ease, eat, drink,
and be merry; perhaps just then, at the same
 time the Hand of God may be writing upon
 the Walls of their Habitations that fatal Sen-
 tence, *Thou fool, this night shall thy Soul be*
required of thee, and then whose shall all those
things be, which thou hast provided? And what
 sad Reflections must such a one needs make
 upon his own Folly, when he sees that all
 that Mirth and Ease, which he has promised
 himself for so many Years, must be at an end
 in a very few Hours; and not only so, but
 that Mirth turned into Howlings, and that
 Ease into a bed of Flames; when the Soul
 must

must be torn away on a sudden from the Things it loved, and go where it will hate to live, and yet cannot die. And were it not better for us to embrace cordially the *things which belong to our everlasting peace*, before *they are hid from our eyes*? Were it not better for us all to be wise betimes, by preventing such a Danger, than to open our Eyes, as the unhappy rich Man did, when we are in the Place of Torment?

Be persuaded then with humble, penitent, and obedient Hearts, to go out of your sinful selves, and meet the blessed *Jesus*, who is now on the Way, and comes to us in the Person and in the Bowels of a Saviour, wooing us to accept those easy Conditions of Pardon and Peace offered in his Holy Gospel, rather than stay till he become our Adversary, and our Judge too, when he will *deliver us over to the tormentors, till we have paid the utmost farthing, i. e. to all eternity*: when those who have made a Mock at Sin all their Lives, and laughed at the pretended Cheats of Religion and its Priests, shall find themselves at last the greatest Fools, and the most sadly cheated in the World; for God will then *laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear cometh; when it cometh as desolation, and their destruction as a whirlwind*. And since they would not suffer his Mercy to rejoice over his Justice, nor cause any joy in Heaven, as the Text mentions, in their Conversion; his Justice will certainly rejoice over his Mercy, and cause joy in Heaven, (as it did at the fall of *Babylon*, which would not be cured, *Rev xix, 1.*) at their Confusion. And O that there were such

such a Heart in them, that they would consider this betimes, that in the midst of their carnal Jollities, they would but vouchsafe to regard what may happen hereafter, and what will certainly be the End of these Things. For however the Fruits of Sin may seem *pleasant to the Eye, and to be desired, to make one seem wise and witty to the World*; yet alas! they are all but empty and unsatisfactory at present, and leave a mortal Sting behind them, and *bitterness in the latter end*; like the Book St. JOHN eat; *Rev. x. 10. which in his mouth was sweet as honey, but as soon as he had eaten it his belly was bitter.* And though God should please at last to bring Men back in their old age from their sinful Courses, by a *way of weeping*, to pluck them as *firebrands* out of *everlasting burnings*; yet if Men consider how rare and difficult a Thing it is to *be born again when one is old*, how many pangs and violences to Nature there must needs be, to put off the habits and inclinations to old Sins; as difficult (saith the Prophet) *as for the Leopard to change his spots, or the Ethiopian his skin*; and then when that is done, what Scars and Weaknesses even a Cure must leave behind; I say, he that duly considers this, will think it better to secure his Salvation, and all his present true Comforts, by preserving his Innocency, or alleviating his Work by a daily Repentance for lesser Failings, than to venture upon one single chance of a Death-bed Repentance; which is no more to be depended upon, for the performance or acceptance, than it can encourage any Man not to labour, because ELIAS was

about

fed

fed by Ravens, or the *Israelites* with Manna from heaven.

If then there be any (though alas that need not be asked) that have made the greatness of their Wit, or Birth, or Fortune, *Instruments of iniquity to iniquity*; let them now convert them, in their own Conversion, to that original noble use for which God intended them, *viz.* to be *Instruments of righteousness unto holiness*.

To these especially that are thus great, not only God, but this great Person also, by my Mouth, *being dead yet speaketh*; for as St. PAUL seem'd more especially concerned for his Brethren and Kinsmen according to the Flesh; and even the rich Man in Hell, though sufficiently distracted by his own Sufferings, yet seems hugely desirous that one might be sent from the Dead to his Brethren, that he might *testify unto them, lest they also come into that place of torment*: so this illustrious Convert, after God had opened his Eyes to see his Follies, was more especially desirous of the Salvation of those that were his Brethren, though not in the Flesh, yet in the greatness of their Quality, and of their Sins; passionately wishing, *that all such, were not only almost, but altogether such as he now was*, saving his bodily Afflictions; and of great force, methinks, should the Admonitions of a dying Friend be. The ingenious MICHAEL DE MONTAIGNE reckons him the best Phylician, who himself has had the Disease which he pretends to cure; and behold, a greater than he says to St. PETER, *When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren*; which assures us, that they which

themselves

themselves have been in a Condition to need a remarkable Conversion, are not incapable thereby, but obliged, and the better qualified for such a charitable Work.

Now these especially I would beseech, as the Minister of Christ, and as such, *though we are reviled we bless, though we are defamed we intreat, to suffer the word of exhortation*; that they would not terminate their Eyes upon the outward Pomp and Pageantry that attends them, as the vulgar Jews did upon their Rites and Ceremonies; but (as the wiser Israelites, who esteemed those glittering formalities as the Types and Images of heavenly Things) be quickened by them to the ambition of original Honours, and future Glory. How much were it to be wished, that such Persons especially would be followers of God and Goodness, since, whether they will or no, Men will be followers of them; all of them, according to their respective Magnitudes, like Stars, casting a good or bad influence upon their Inferiours; and not only so, but oftentimes upon their Superiours too; as the corrupt Blood in the Feet, in the Course of its Circulation, after some time, passes upwards into the Head.

It is true, an eminent Station is liable to several mischiefs, from which a mean Condition is free; but the God of order, who has made Dignity in Place, and Affluence of Riches necessary to the World, has proportioned his Supports; and if the incitements to Sin do abound unto the rich and noble, *the Grace of God, if they are careful to improve it, will much more abound, both to God's glory, and their own.*

Thus

Thus if the Temptations of great Persons be more, and greater than those of Inferiors; their Abilities and Understandings are ordinarily greater too: and if they lie more open to the Assaults of the Devil, they have generally greater Sagacity to foresee the Danger, and more powerful Assistances to go through it. Nor is Piety inconsistent with Greatness, any more than it is with Policy, but is the best Foundation and Security both to the one and the other. The breeding of Moses at Court, without doubt, contributed much even to his religious Performances, at least so far, as to make them more useful and exemplary to others: but then he was sincerely virtuous all the while, as well whilst reputed the Son of PHARAOH's Daughter, as JETHRO's Son-in-law. The Prophet ISAIAH was Nephew to a King, and bred, as is supposed, in the Court; whence we may observe, his Style is more majestic than the other Prophets; as that of the great Doctor of the *Gentiles*, who was bred at the Feet of GAMALIEL, is than the other Apostles; God making use of the natural Temper and Educations of Men, to be assisting to supernatural Purposes.

WE find Christians in CESAR's Household, as soon as any where else in *Rome*; and when Christianity had once gained CONSTANTINE, it spread itself farther over the Empire in a few Years, than before it had done in some Centuries: as Waters running downwards spread themselves freer, than when forced upwards against Nature. Since then so much good or mischief depends upon illustrious Examples, will it not better become Men to draw the Multi-
I
tude

tude after them to Heaven by their Piety, than by infectious Guilt to be at the head of a miserable Company of the Damned?

It is this Piety, a timely and exemplary Piety, that will perpetuate to Men of Birth and Fortune their Honours, and their Estates too; as well by deriving on them the Blessing of God, who is the true Fountain of Honour, as by creating an awe and a reverence for them from all orders of Men, even to many Generations; a reverence which will be fresh and lasting, when all the Trophies of Wit and Gaiety are laid in the Dust. It is this Piety that will be the guide of their Youth, and the comfort of their Age; for *length of Days are in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour*. It is this, and this only, that can make all outward Blessings comfortable, and indeed Blessings to us, by making them the steps and means of attaining the never-fading Honours and incomprehensible Glories of that Kingdom which is above; where there shall be no more Sin, nor Sickness, nor Pains, nor Tears, nor Death; but we shall rest from all our Labours, and our Works shall follow us.

UNTO which, *God of his infinite Mercy bring us, for the Merits and for the Mediation of Jesus Christ our Saviour; to whom, with the Father and Holy Spirit, let us ascribe all Praise and Adoration, now and for ever. Amen.*

FINIS.

